



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

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OVERVIEW

Summertime fishing is in full swing and anglers both offshore and inshore are keeping busy with the variety of fish this area has to offer. Offshore, bluefin tuna are the star of the show! Numerous reports of big catches averaging 80 to 90 pounds (with some topping 120 pounds) were reported from several locations. The Lumpy Bottom seems to be the hot spot for these fish and others including yellowfin tuna and gaffer-sized dolphin. Inshore, flounder hunters are still going at it, and it may be paying off because the keeper rate seems to have increased this week. Virginia Beach and Chincoteague reported the best catches of flounder. Spot have arrived, and while small, they have been numerous from the local piers. Kingfish, Spanish mackerel, and bluefish have also provided impressive action throughout the area.

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Donna at Captain Bob's reports flounder are still here! Water temps have ranged between 68 and 73 degrees, and anglers are finding them right in front of Tom's Cove Campground, both from the water and the pier. Inlet View fishing pier has reported flounder catches as well. Nice ones were hooked right in front of Captain Bobs at red Marker 24. Queen's Sound provides numerous flounder, but most are throwbacks. Several 6-pounders have come in from the Chincoteague Channel on both sides of the sandbar. Kingfish are still king! Even the novice vacationer, after fishing one day on the beach, boat, or pier, comes back a master kingfish fisherman. Other catches include small speckled trout and cobia, and the wrecks are busy with spadefish, sheepshead, and tautog. The Parking Lot and the Lumpy Bottom, are hot with bluefin tuna (most average 88 pounds, but some are tipping the scales at 120 pounds). Tuna fishing methods have changed from trolling to chunking with a mixture of sardines and butterfish. King mackerel are everywhere (unusual for this area). Bluefish have also moved inshore in small schools. Also, staff has only heard of a few croaker found in the area, and Donna reports that they would rather have the flounder instead!

Wachapreague

Offshore fishing was hot this week, according to staff at Wachapreague Marina. Numerous bluefin tuna were caught at the Lumpy Bottom and 26-Mile Hill; the largest was 176 pounds. Gaffer dolphin and the occasional king mackerel or yellowfin tuna were landed from the same area. Inshore, flounder fishing remains the same with the keeper ratio at 1 to every 15 fish hooked.

Captain Zed's reports that offshore action has been fantastic. The bluefin tuna bite is really great (fish up to 135 pounds were reported). A citation big eye tuna (89 pounds) was caught aboard the MARLIN MAGIC. There were several bluefin tuna release citations, as well. The best catches came from 20 fathoms and at the Lumpy Bottom. Inshore, flounder action has been great (keeper ratio is about 3:10). Areas near Cedar and Paramore Islands seem to be the hot spots. Anglers are also catching kingfish and croaker. Wreck fishing has produced nice catches of black sea bass and a tautog citation at 12 pounds, 3 ounces.

Onancock

From Onancock, Captain Wil reports croaker of various sizes. The larger ones can be found south of Onancock in the shallow areas. Spot are numerous, and pan-sized grey trout have been hooked as well. Plenty of sea mullet are around, as well as small bluefish. Keeper-sized flounder are also available in local waters.

Cape Charles

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle report a variety of fish. At Morley's Wharf in Exmore, decent catches of croaker have been reported. Croaker have also been found in waters near Oyster. Spot are being caught off of the piers at Cape Charles and Kiptopeke. While the cobia action has slowed, flounder were found at the Cell and near Buoy 18 this week.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

At Cobb's Marina, staff reports catches of black drum and spadefish, with a few flounder mixed in. Most of the action has come from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. On July 4th, a 7-pound, 4-ounce citation flounder was caught on spot at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel by angler Benjamin Thomas.

Flounder and cobia were the catches of the week at Sunset Boating Center. Flounder have been found at the Hampton Bar. Cobia, while small, have been found throughout the area, with Cape Henry being a hot spot. No citations were reported this week.

Several citations were awarded last week at Salt Ponds Marina. Red drum and cobia have been the primary catch, with some flounder mixed in. Charter boats have reported spadefish catches. A citation flounder came in on July 5th (8 pounds, 5 ounces, 26.5 inches) hooked at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. On the 2nd, there were two red drum release citations, one from the 2nd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the other from the Salt Ponds area. A 77-pound, 5-ounce cobia was brought in from the 4th island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Staff at the York River Fishing Center reports anglers are catching keeper-sized flounder throughout the bay area, and a citation 8-pound, 2-ounce flounder was brought in. There are also reports of keepers coming from the Coast Guard Pier. Small croaker, spot, and bluefish were landed from the Gloucester Point Pier.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Flounder fishing has really turned on. Enjoy it now and remember that the season will be closed from July 21 through July 30. The largest fish are being caught at buoy 42, the Cape Henry Wreck and of course, at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Anglers fishing with live bait around hard structures are catching the largest flounder. Large croaker are being caught at the Cell/buoy 42 area. Nice spot are showing up in the catches of bottom fishermen. This is a good sign for the fall run. Spadefish can be found over the inshore wrecks, at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at the Cell. The largest fish have come from the Cell though more fish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Some large speckled trout are being caught in the Piankatank River and at the Hole in the Wall. Spanish mackerel are being caught along the oceanfront and in the lower bay up to Windmill Point. The Triangle Wrecks are producing some nice black sea bass. Cobia fishing has been slow, and most of the fish being caught have been small, but some anglers are still managing to catch big fish. This bite should pick up. Red drum are still being caught. Some are being caught by anglers targeting cobia. Others are being caught when a school is found by accident. These roaming schools of red drum can be encountered along the oceanfront and in the lower bay. When you find them like that, they will bite just about anything you cast to them. Black drum are being caught around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The sheepshead bite is not great but some big fish have been caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A lot of amberjack are waiting for you at the South Tower. Closer to home, the Ricks, Hanks, and Gulf Hustler wrecks would all be good places to try for a big jack. Offshore, dolphin are everywhere. Bluefin can be caught on the Hot Dog, 26-Mile Hill, and on the Fingers. King mackerel have been landed from this area as well. Yellowfin tuna have been scarce. The Triple 0s area has been producing impressive numbers of billfish.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

It is difficult to decide what to fish for right now since so much is available. Inshore, the summer's sluggish flounder spell has turned around, with more and larger flatfish becoming the norm. Few boats are returning empty-handed. Big fish are resulting mostly from live bait offered along varying bottom structures toward the lower part of the bay. The Cell, Back River Reef, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure, and inshore wrecks are just a few of the best flounder hot-spots lately. Drifters are also having good luck with strip baits near Buoy 42 and the Thimble Shoal Channel near Cape Henry. David Bateman of Chesapeake scored with a nice 7-pound, 6-ounce flattie while working a live spot along the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week.

Although the run of large spadefish run never really materialized this year, there are plenty of 2- to 5-pounders ganging up on suspended clam near the Bay Bridge Tunnel islands and the Cell. The Chesapeake Light Tower and the Tower Reef area are also still providing similar action.

Sheepshead are lagging behind, with most fish successfully eluding anglers. A handful of these structure-oriented fish are coming from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure, but most are on the smallish size. Trigger fish are numerous again this year, and some anglers are beginning to target

these fish, which are normally a by-catch. These aggressive little fish will hit most any bait.

Although there are scattered reports of cobia falling for bait fished on the shoals, the scene is still less than expected for most anglers, with many smaller fish in the mix. Latimer Shoal and the Nine-Foot Shoal area are decent locations lately. A few cobia are coming from the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with tossed live baits enticing some action with mostly 30- to 40-pound fish.

Reports of good catches of grey trout up to 4 pounds are placing these fish near the fourth island and the 12-mile marker along the Bay Bridge as well as the Concrete Ships. Nice spot are also available around the Concrete Ships. Croaker are providing action around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Bar, and the Cell where hardheads can range up to over 2 pounds lately.

The excellent Spanish mackerel bite happening in lower bay waters and along the ocean front is still a crowd pleaser. Captain Jake Hiles aboard the Matador out of Rudee Inlet reports that he is getting limits of good-sized Spanish averaging 21- to 22-inches and larger. The best luck is coming on small spoons trolled way far back. Many anglers are anxiously awaiting the first catches of king mackerel, which should happen soon.

The summer-time red drum action is changing shape as these scavengers form big schools just under the surface all around the lower bay. Most recent red catches are coming from casters following the schools. Black drum are continuing to offer results to casters targeting these massive fish around all four islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A few fly anglers are also getting in on the action.

Amberjack are peaking some curiosity since they are readily available, but many folks don't want to pay the fuel bill to make the run. These brutes are ready for action at local wrecks, as well as the South Tower.

Tarpon have made their debut on the Eastern Shore, with sightings of silver kings motivating tarpon hunters to head for the shallows out of Oyster. Nice croaker are also providing hardhead hunters with good catches in the deeper holes and channels in the backwater areas of Oyster.

Speckled trout and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are taking baits within both Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets. Spot action is also on the upswing in these same areas, with the Fishing Center reporting that nicer fish are becoming more consistent.

Offshore, the billfish bite has cooled, but fish are still available between the 800 line and the Triple 0's. Gaffer dolphin are abundant, and a few nice wahoo have also hit the dock. Yellowfin tuna still remain almost non-existent, but the bluefin tuna are filling in. Good bluefin action is coming from the inshore lumps, with the Fingers, and 26-Mile Hill providing some of the best action with fish ranging to over 100 pounds.

Virginia Middle Bay

Roger, of Jetts Hardware, reports that the fishing has been productive with small croaker and spot catches by the bottom fishermen, although it appears the larger croaker have moved on. Decent numbers of taylor-sized bluefish are being caught trolling. In addition to the blues being caught on spoons, the much anticipated Spanish mackerel are starting to show up in the mix as well. For those people wanting to catch flounder, a few can be found around the point, but finding a keeper is proving to be difficult.

Smith Point Marina has had slower fishing conditions than last week, but there are still flounder to be caught at the mouth of the Potomac and Little Wicomico Rivers. Some stripers are still haunting the area as well as nice-sized croaker, bluefish, and a few speckled trout.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports that the spot fishing has been great this week. The Spike off Deltaville and Cherry Point in the Piankatank River have been winners. The spot are growing very fast, and some larger ones are arriving each day. They are catching a lot of flounder in both the Rappahannock and the Piankatank Rivers (at the mouth of each). Croaker fishing off Gwynn Island was successful at flood tide. Flounder fishing at the cell is hit and miss, but it's worth the trip to try your luck. Plenty of bluefish are available at Windmill Point. Good-size Spanish mackerel can be found there as well, but the run is not in full swing yet.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spot are biting well, and the catch includes a few #1-sized fish. The best places for these are the Spike and Butlers Hole. Croaker were available off of Gwynn's Island this weekend, including some large fish (up to 16 inches). Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are available along Windmill Bar. This week, we weighed our first citation Spanish in several years. It came from Windmill Bar. Four citation Flounder were weighed in this week; flounder fishing at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area has improved dramatically during the week. Several limits of fish were caught. Spadefish are biting at the Cell and at Wolftrap. Speckled Trout fishing improved this week in local waters. We weighed two citations, and there were reports of several other large fish caught in the Piankatank, at Cherry Point, and at the Hole-in-the-Wall. Small Red Drum are available in the creeks and along shorelines. No reports of Cobia in this area yet.

Virginia Beach

According to Mary at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, offshore fishing is doing really well. Dolphin are strong with a couple of citations, and five billfish citations came in this week including, white, blue, and sailfish. The first wahoo of the season was caught, and it was a 58-pound, 5-ounce citation. There were also several bluefin tuna release citations, the largest of which was 64 inches. Inshore, there were tons of flounder just outside of the Fishing Center this week, and anglers were catching keepers within just a few hours. There are also large quantities of small Spanish mackerel and bluefish providing lots of action to anglers in the area.

Paula of Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports a fantastic marlin bite this weekend at the 0-50. Other offshore catches include bluefin tuna at the Hot Dog and a few dolphin. Inshore, anglers are targeting bluefish and Spanish mackerel along the ocean front; most are catching a lot of taylor blues and some Spanish mackerel.

Virginia Piers

A mixed bag of croaker, spot, flounder, and Spanish mackerel were caught at the Ocean View Pier this week. Most of the flounder were under the legal size limit of 19 inches. Anglers are catching numerous spot in the past few days in the mornings on the incoming tide.

Numerous fish have been hooked at the Lynnhaven Pier. Catches include spot, croaker, sea mullet, a few flounder, and small grey trout. The spot run has been very productive in the past few days, throughout the daytime hours and into the evenings.

At the Virginia Beach Pier, nighttime fishing has been productive for bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Shark have also been biting at night. Recently, spot fishing has picked up, and crabbing has been doing well.

According to staff at the Sandbridge Pier, anglers are catching spot, bluefish, and flounder. The majority of the catch has been spot and bluefish, and the spot are relatively small.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore of the Nags Head area, fishing has been slow this week, with only a few small dolphin and yellowfin tuna landed. Anglers running out to the gulf stream had better luck with billfish, cobia, and king mackerel. People fishing closer to shore were catching triggerfish, black sea bass, amberjack and striped bass. Nearshore and pier fishermen were catching bluefish and Spanish mackerel. The local pier fishermen were also able to catch sea mullet, croaker, speckled trout and cobia at night. Red drum were turning up in the surf.

Offshore fishing results, out of the Oregon Inlet area, consisted of mostly dolphin with a few cobia and billfish mixed in. Near shore, trolling was producing bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Fishermen working in the inlet were catching sheepshead, black drum, and tautog. Shallower areas in the sound yielded respectable flounder and speckled trout.

South of Oregon Inlet, the surf fishing was slow until early in the work week with Spanish mackerel and bluefish being caught around the Ramp 49. Sound fishing was better with speckled trout and flounder showing in abundance.

Offshore fishing out of Cape Hatteras was weather dependant with good showing of dolphin when the wind wasn't blowing. Other species being caught included wahoo, king mackerel, and amberjack. Inshore fishing was the highlight for this area as the speckled trout and red drum bites have been excellent.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

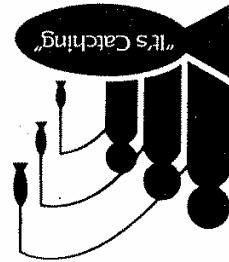
Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A prominent message states "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and explains that they are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. Another section titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists fishing regulations: Closed Season (May 1 through June 24), Minimum Size Limit (14 inches), and Possession Limit (4 per person). On the left side, there's a box showing statistics for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, and Catches: 3,941. The Virginia Recreational Assessment Program logo is also visible on the left.

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